



# NEWS RELEASE

**Arizona House of Representatives**

**Speaker of the House Rusty Bowers (R-25)**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Speaker Bowers Will Not Advance HB 2476 But Will Continue to Fight for Upper Gila Valley Landowners**

**STATE CAPITOL, PHOENIX** – Speaker of the House Rusty Bowers (R-25) thanked landowners from the Upper Gila Valley for testifying today in support of HB 2476 at the House Natural Resources, Energy & Water Committee.

HB 2476 would ensure that future non-use of a water right does not result in automatic forfeiture. This removes the incentive for water users to exercise their water rights or lose them and promotes water efficiency and conservation.

Under current state law, water rights are relinquished after five successive years of non-use and revert to the state. Federal Indian reserved water rights are exempt from this statute.

In December 2017, the Gila River Indian Community (GRIC) filed forfeiture actions against landowners in the Upper Gila Valley. This action follows the 419 sever and transfer applications filed by landowners in 2008.

**“Because HB 2476 has nothing to do with the Drought Contingency Plan, I refused to include it in those discussions,”** said Speaker Bowers. **“While I understand that the GRIC have chosen to condition their support of the DCP on the defeat of HB 2476, I don’t feel that should give them veto power over unrelated water legislation.”**

**“However, I am more sensitive to the issue of interference with litigation currently within the legal system, and I do not want any undesired or unintended consequence that could be interruptive. I respect the multiple thousands of well owners along the tributaries to the Gila River that can be affected by the outcome of that legal activity. That respect, exacerbated by the deadlines that the state is facing for finality on the DCP, has caused me to decide to hold HB 2476.”**

**“The concept of forfeiture of water rights is a terrible possibility for these thousands of rural folks across Arizona, and it deserves the attention of the Arizona Supreme Court in**

**seeking a just and reliable remedy. It is my hope that result will remove the burdensome uncertainty for so many Arizonans.”**

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